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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Written statement submitted by Worldview International Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[13 March 1997]

1. The situation of human rights in Tibet has been discussed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and other United Nations bodies for many years. However, in recent years, except for the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities the United Nations human rights system, notably the Commission on Human Rights, has failed to censure China. This is very regrettable because all countries, irrespective of their power, should be scrutinized when they repeatedly disregard international standards and norms on human rights.

2. Worldview International Foundation submits this written statement in earnest hope that the United Nations human rights mechanisms, particularly the Commission on Human Rights, will genuinely consider the situation in Tibet at the current session. Such action by the United Nations is crucial due to the nature and persistent patterns of human rights violations in Tibet. As the Dalai Lama told the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 23 October 1996:

"Violations of human rights in Tibet have a distinct character. Such abuses are aimed at Tibetans as a people from asserting their own identity and their wish to preserve it. Thus, human rights violations in Tibet are often the result of institutionalized racial and cultural discrimination. If the human rights situation in Tibet is to be improved, the issue of Tibet should be addressed on its own merits."

3. During the past year, our organization has received numerous reports on the worsening situation of human rights in Tibet. Cases of arbitrary detention, disappearance, custodial death, summary execution, torture and unfair trial have increased while the Tibetan people continue to be denied their basic rights, such as freedom of speech, assembly, religion and movement. The continued incommunicado detention of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the eleventh Panchen Lama of Tibet, is one example. The summary execution of 34 Tibetans in Tibet in 1996 in the name of the "Strike Hard" campaign and the sentencing of Ngawang Choephel, a Tibetan musician, to 18 years in prison for so-called "spying" are other indications.

4. Political and religious repression have intensified in Tibet during the past few years, particularly in 1995 and 1996. A Tibetan NGO based in India reported that in 1996 204 known arrests took place in Tibet; 1,018 (265 females and 50 under the age of 18) identified Tibetan prisoners remained in prisons; 12 cases of disappearance was known to have occurred; 8 Tibetan political prisoners died as a result of torture and ill-treatment, including 3 custodial deaths; and 1,295 monks were expelled. 1/

5. Political arrests in 1996 have resulted from various campaigns launched in Tibet in early 1996 by the Chinese authorities. For example, as many as 110 arrests resulted from the "Strike Hard" campaign under which were conducted "Patriotic Re-education" sessions in monasteries and nunneries. In mid-March 1996, 25 students of Ngarik Kyitselling school were detained in Kumbum in north-eastern Tibet after posters calling for Tibetan independence appeared at Kumbum monastery.

6. The denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Tibet have been strengthened by China's refusal to allow international human rights organizations to gain independent access to the country. Furthermore, monitoring and gathering facts on human rights violations face severe problems as China considers all information that pertains to the current situation in Tibet as "leaking State secrets". For example, last year, a New Zealand tourist was detained, interrogated and forced to make a confession after sending a fax to New Zealand that included a reference to what he thought might be a bomb explosion in Lhasa. 2/

7. In recent times, the Chinese authorities continued to carry out policies to deny economic, social and cultural rights to the Tibetan people. One clear example here is the attempt by the authorities to create further obstacles to the study of the Tibetan language. In 1996, a decision was taken in the so-called "Tibet Autonomous Region" to close a highly successful project in three secondary schools where Tibetan children were being taught in their own language instead of Chinese. At Tibet University in Lhasa, for example, all except 1 of the University's 17 courses are now believed to be taught in

Chinese, and although scholars have prepared textbooks in Tibet for primary and secondary schools, work on tertiary-level textbooks has met with funding and bureaucratic difficulties. 3/ The University was established in 1985 to increase the study of the Tibetan language.

8. In north-eastern Tibet, a Tibetan literary magazine was banned in early 1996 because one of the pages said: "We have compiled this in memory of our ancestors, who have written their history in blood so that progress might be made in our literature. We have written this out of our love for the snow mountains". This magazine was published by students of Ngarik Kyitselling school at Kumbum monastery. After detentions, the whereabouts of Damchoe Gyatso, aged 27, the principal editor of this magazine, remained unknown in August 1996.

9. The situation of the implementation of Chinese settlers in Tibet and the policy of coerced birth control on Tibetan women are directly threatening the very survival of the religious, cultural and national identity of the Tibetan people. It was, therefore, alarming that some 500,000 Chinese were to be moved into Tibet to work in copper mines and that the Chinese authorities planned to build several mining towns to house about 100,000 migrant workers. 4/

10. During the Third Work Forum on Tibet held in Beijing in July 1994, the Chinese authorities publicly admitted a policy of population transfer in Tibet. It was officially stated that former soldiers, paramilitary troops, cadres, technicians and entrepreneurs from China were to be encouraged to move to Tibet through incentives provided by the Government. It had been previously stated in a leaked report of a top-secret meeting held near Chengdu on 12 May 1993 that strategies would be adopted to "flood" Tibet with more Chinese settlers.

11. The increase in Chinese settlements in Tibet creates new tensions between the Tibetans and the settlers. The social life of the Tibetans, particularly in major towns, has been assaulted by prostitution, cheap liquor, karaoke bars, pool tables, discos and Chinese music and movies. Unemployment among Tibetan youths is on the rise. On the economic front, opportunities are being snatched by Chinese settlers who have more connections and capital. Even after more than four decades of "peaceful liberation" Tibet under China has not been able to produce capable Tibetan professionals and experts. The region remains amongst the poorest in the world.

12. In a statement issued on 20 February 1997, after the demise of Mr. Deng Xiaoping, the Dalai Lama remarked: "Following Mr. Deng Xiaoping's statement in 1979, that apart from the question of total independence of Tibet all other issues could be discussed and resolved, I was hopeful that the issue of Tibet would be resolved during his lifetime. Encouraged by the overall changes in China and the new pragmatic attitude towards the issue of Tibet, I have, since then, consistently and sincerely made attempts to engage the Chinese Government in earnest negotiations over the future of Tibet. Sadly, the Chinese Government has not responded positively to my proposals and initiatives over the past 18 years for negotiated resolution within the framework stated by Mr. Deng Xiaoping. On my part, as soon as we receive a positive indication from Beijing I am ready to enter into negotiations anytime

and anywhere without preconditions." It is, therefore, evident that the international community should pay greater attention to Tibet and encourage China that it is in its best interest to resolve the Tibetan question.

13. In conclusion, Worldview International Foundation urges the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to adopt a strong resolution on China in view of the gross and systematic violations of human rights in Tibet. The adoption of such a resolution, we believe, will be the best approach to convey a positive message to all the unfortunate victims of China. And such a message will give hope to defenders of human rights, justice and democracy in this world.

Notes

1/ Tibet: One More Year of Political Repression - 1966 Annual Report - Human Rights Violations in Tibet, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Dharamsala, India, February 1997.

2/ United States Department of State, Human Rights Country Report, 30 January 1997.

3/ "Students' unease at language policies in schools, university", Tibet Information Network, 31 December 1996.

4/ South China Morning Post, Hong Kong, April 1996.

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